basis to power sector, so as to further enhance the Plant Load Factor (PLF) of existing power plants.

Reservation for Dalit Muslims and Dalit Christians

*436. SHRI BHAGAT SINGH KOSHYARI: Will the Minister of MINORITY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the National Commission for Minorities has recommended reservation for Dalit Muslims and Dalit Christians;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Dalit Muslims and Dalit Christians live in horrible conditions; and

(d) if so, the steps taken to uplift their economic, social and educational status?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF MINORITY AFFAIRS (SHRI SALMAN KHURSHEED): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) In 1995, National Commission for Minorities (NCM), under Section 9(1) of the National Commission for Minorities Act 1992, recommended that Scheduled Caste (SC)/Scheduled Tribe (ST) converts to Christianity or Islam should continue to enjoy all privileges and benefits as SCs/STs on par with the SC/ST converts to Buddhism. Further, in 1997, NCM, under Section 9(1) of the NCM Act 1992, recommended for the outright removal of the Proviso in Constitution (Scheduled Caste) Order, 1950 which confines the SC status strictly to three specified religions. Further, the National Commission for Minorities, in their Annual Report for 2006-07, have recommended that Christian and Muslim dalits must be given the benefit of affirmative action through reservation.

(c) and (d) The following schemes are being implemented by the Ministry of Minority Affairs for the upliftment of minority communities:-

1. Pre-matric scholarship scheme.
2. Post-matric scholarship scheme.
3. Merit-cum-means scholarship scheme.
4. Free Coaching and allied scheme.
5. Multi-sectoral development programme.
6. Equity contribution to National Minorities Development and Finance Corporation (NNDFC) for implementation of various lending and promotional schemes.
7. Grant-in-aid to Maulana Azad Education Foundation (MAEF) for implementation of schemes for promoting education.
8. Prime Minister's 15 Point Programme for the Welfare of Minorities is being implemented to ensure that the benefits of various government programmes/schemes reach the

underprivileged and disadvantaged section of minority communities. To ensure equitable distribution of benefits of these programmes/schemes, among all the minority communities, the new programme envisages location of a certain portion of development projects in minority concentration areas. It also provides that, wherever possible, 15% of targets and outlays under various programmes/schemes should be earmarked for minority communities.

Recovery of coal

*437. SHRI R.C. SINGH: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that about six million tonnes of grade 'B' coal has been found buried under backfilled overburden in Sonepur Bazari Opencast Project, Eastern Coalfields Limited, due to incapability of management; and

(b) if so, what efforts Government is making to bring the above coal out from there?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI SHRIPRAKASH JAISWAL): (a) Out of total excavation made so far in Sonepur Bazari Project entire coal has been extracted and no coal has been buried within the excavated area as per Project Report. However, during the commencement years of the project *i.e.* in the years 1997-98 and 1998-99 on the southern part of access trench, some overburden had been dumped over R-IV bottom coal seam (lower most quarriable coal seam). The above said overburden dumping had been restricted to the area where coal had to be left as barrier against adjoining underground workings of Haripur underground colliery and R-IV bottom coal seam where it is unworkable due to thinning.

(b) Presently the working of Sonepur Bazari Open Cast Project have advanced towards the eastern part of the property. The balance coal of workable R-IV bottom coal seam will be extracted on retreat.

Use of EVMs

†*438. SHRI AJAY SINGH CHAUTALA: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the public have apprehensions about the Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs);

(b) whether it is also a fact that the electoral officers appointed by Government do not have sufficient know-how of these machines; and

(c) whether the old system of ballot papers would be introduced in place of Electronic Voting Machines during the next Assembly Elections in the country?

THE MINISTER OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI M. VEERAPPA MOILY): (a) No, Sir.

(b) No, Sir. Elaborate Training (at least three rounds) is given on the EVMs to polling officials.

---

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.